



Virginia Defense Force

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Media Talking Points

1. What is the Virginia Defense Force?

The Virginia Defense Force is the Commonwealth's military reserve. The force is governed by the military laws of Virginia and managed by the Virginia Department of Military Affairs. The chain of command for the force consists of the Governor of Virginia (Commander-in-Chief), Adjutant General of Virginia, and Commanding General of the Virginia Defense Force. It complements and supports the Virginia National Guard.

2. What is the mission of the Virginia Defense Force?

The four missions of the Virginia Defense Force are specified in the Code of Virginia [§ 44-54.4](#):

- Provide for an adequately trained organized reserve militia to assume control of Virginia National Guard facilities and to secure any federal and state property left in place in the event of the mobilization of the Virginia National Guard.
- Assist in the mobilization of the Virginia National Guard.
- Support the Virginia National Guard in providing family assistance to military dependents within the Commonwealth in the event of the mobilization of the Virginia National Guard
- Provide a military force to respond to the call of the Governor in those circumstances described in ([§ 44-75.1](#))

3. What is the difference between the Virginia Defense Force and the Virginia National Guard?

The National Defense Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1933 federalized the various state militias and created today's National Guard. The National Guard is a "dual status" force with both federal and state missions and is subject to federal activation and deployment outside of the United States.

The U.S. Congress authorized state defense forces to ensure that state governors have adequate military resources during federal activations or deployments of the states' National Guard units. In contrast to the National Guard, members of state defense forces may not be federalized or deployed outside of the United States. ([32 U.S.C. 109](#))

4. What are the eligibility requirements for membership in the Virginia Defense Force?

- United States citizenship or Legal Resident Alien status
- A valid Social Security number
- Age 16 to 65 (Minors require written consent of parent or legal guardian.)
- Physical ability to perform in any assigned billet
- No felony convictions
- Good moral character

5. Are members of the Virginia Defense Force armed?

The Code of Virginia states that "members of the Virginia State Defense Force shall not be armed with firearms during the performance of training duty or state active duty, except under circumstances and in instances authorized by the Governor." ([§ 44.54.12](#))

6. Are members of the Virginia Defense Force paid?

Members receive pay only while on active duty authorized by the Governor. Pay rates are based on the U.S. Department of Defense's military pay scale and members' rank. Members are not paid for monthly drills or annual field training exercises.

7. How long are enlistments in the Virginia Defense Force?

Membership in the Virginia Defense Force is voluntary and members may request discharge at any time.

8. How are ranks assigned to new members of the Virginia Defense Force?

New members of the Virginia Defense Force with prior federal service may enter the force at the same grade held in federal service, provided a billet of matching grade is vacant at time of appointment or enlistment. New members without prior federal service shall be enlisted. New members with certain professional occupations (doctors, lawyers, nurses and pilots) may join the force as commissioned officers if assigned to a billet matching their civilian occupations.

9. Are members of the Virginia Defense Force required to wear uniforms?

The Code of Virginia requires the force to be uniformed, conforming to standards of dress and appearance prescribed by the Adjutant General of Virginia. The uniform for the Virginia Defense Force is a modified version of the United States Army's legacy Battle Dress Uniform (BDU) which conforms to state specific requirements contained in [National Guard Bureau Regulation 10-4](#). (§ 44.54.9)

10. What are the medical requirements for membership in the Virginia Defense Force?

While the Virginia Defense Force does not require formal physical testing or training, members must be physically able to perform assigned duties.

11. Is my job protected if I am ordered to state active duty with the Virginia Defense Force?

The Code of Virginia provides employment protections for members of the Virginia Defense Force and the Virginia National Guard. (§ 44.93)

12. Where can prospective members obtain information about the Virginia Defense Force?

Information about the Virginia Defense Force can be found at www.vdf.virginia.gov or by calling toll-free at (866) 791-9164.